

Kirklyn Kerr Fund

Testimony- Elizabeth Houston

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You sit at your kitchen table in front of a delicious burger. As you tuck your napkin into your shirt, your dog whines at your side. He stares up with deep brown eyes at the morsels on the tip of your child's fork. A veterinarian helped make this moment possible.

Connecticut Education has always been regarded as one of the finest, providing the next generation with the knowledge needed for future innovation. Funding has allowed for University of Connecticut laboratories to research pressing issues. It has allowed doctors to graduate from the UConn Medical School. It has not funded an in-state veterinary program.

Entering the veterinary field requires years of preparation. An immaculate GPA, extracurricular involvement, and thousands of hours of preparatory work are needed for acceptance. Once admission has been granted, a long career dedicated to the health of animals and the humans who depends on them is dampened by the immense debt of graduate education. It is commonly misunderstood that veterinary graduates enjoy a high salary. In reality, new veterinarians work long hours for low wages. They head out in negative temperatures to care for the animals that end up on our dinner plates, and attend to the laboratory animals on which pivotal cancer drugs are developed. For the past seven years, the five most competitive pre-veterinary students from Connecticut have been able to commit to Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, where they gather the skills needed to assure that the beef cattle are fit for human consumption, that the cough your faithful dog has acquired isn't of concern, and that transported animals enter the state of Connecticut free from infectious disease. They have been able to attend due to the Kirklyn Kerr Fund.

Governor Malloy has proposed cutting the Kirklyn Kerr Fund, as well as many other funds for higher education, in his 2015 biennial budget. Connecticut has always stood as a leader in agriculture. The University of Connecticut is known not only for preparing its students for a successful career as veterinarians, but also for creating accomplished engineers and researchers. These professionals have committed to building Connecticut infrastructure, developing new medical techniques, and assuring the health of the state. They have made it this far due to the funding available for education. Without funding of STEM, including veterinary medicine, the public health of our society cannot be assured.

As a student who has been accepted in the top five seats at Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine and a woman who is passionate about the relationship between Connecticut public health and education, I hope that you strongly consider adding the Kirklyn Kerr Fund in the 2015 budget. Without it, I personally will be unable to attend veterinary school, unable to serve the State as a public health ambassador, and unable to further the veterinary research being done to improve medicine. Thank you for your time.